United Nations A/54/787

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 March 2000
English
Original: French

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 67
Compliance with arms limitation and disarmament and non-proliferation agreements

Letter dated 6 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement issued on 5 March 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its annex as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 67.

(Signed) Antonio **Monteiro**
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

00-33686 (E) 130300 130300

Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 5 March 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force on 5 March 1970, the European Union reiterates its firm support for the Treaty.

For the European Union, the Treaty has a fundamental role to play in strengthening global peace and security and remains both the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

The European Union welcomes the fact that 187 countries are already parties to the Treaty but feels, nevertheless, that universal accession is the key to the reinforcement of the global non-proliferation and disarmament objectives which are at the core of the Union's policy. The Union therefore urges those States that have not yet done so to take the necessary steps to accede to the Treaty.

The European Union is deeply committed to a better, more promising and internationally secure environment for all. Its member States, both individually and collectively, will work hard for a successful outcome to the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, whose work is scheduled to begin shortly in New York, and call on all other States parties to join them in this endeavour.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.

United Nations A/54/788

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 March 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 99
Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Letter dated 7 March 2000 from the Permanent Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from our Governments, we have the honour to submit the text of a joint Russian-Iranian statement on the proposed pipeline through the Caspian Sea, issued during the visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to the Islamic Republic of Iran on 28 November 1999 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 99.

(*Signed*) Hadi **Nejad Hosseinian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Islamic
Republic of Iran to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Sergey V. **Lavrov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Russian
Federation to the United Nations

00-33692 (E) 140300 140300

Annex

[Original: Russian]

Joint statement by the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the proposed construction of a pipeline through the Caspian Sea

The Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran, convinced that the preservation for future generations of the unique Caspian ecosystem and of its biodiversity requires close cooperation and coordination of the efforts of all the Caspian States, reacted with heightened interest and special concern to the recent signature without their participation of a document concerning economic development of the Caspian Sea in the form of the construction and operation of a Transcaspian underwater pipeline.

The Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran have already stated repeatedly, including in an official context, their categorical objection to the implementation of such projects before all the Caspian States have finally reached general agreement on the adoption of a new legal status for the Caspian Sea and the protection of its ecological security. Such protection involves minimizing possible harm to the marine environment, including the unique sturgeon population. Unfortunately, the rush to implement such projects, and primarily the project for the Transcaspian underwater pipeline, is only complicating and postponing the outcome of the efforts being made by all the Caspian States to find just and generally acceptable solutions concerning the various aspects of the legal status of the Caspian Sea and arrangements for its economic development.

The parties consider that, until some new legal status is devised for the Caspian Sea, the Treaty between the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and Persia of 26 February 1921 and the Treaty on Trade and Navigation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Iran of 25 March 1940 retain their full legal validity.

The Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran believe that the questions concerning the protection of the environment of the Caspian Sea involve the interests of each Caspian State, so that no one of them has the right to take unilateral action that would jeopardize the interests of the others.

The Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran openly announce that they do not agree to the implementation of any projects for Transcaspian underwater pipelines, which pose an environmental threat in conditions of extremely active geodynamics.

The parties express the hope that, in the course of the coming meeting of Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Caspian States within the framework of the special working group on the permanent definition of the legal status of the Caspian Sea, effective measures will be taken to elaborate an appropriate Convention and achieve speedy signature of five-party agreements on the protection of the environment of the Caspian Sea, the preservation and use of its biological resources and the establishment of an Economic Cooperation Council of Caspian States.

United Nations A/54/789

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 March 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 20 (b)
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Letter dated 7 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter from Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of the Sudan to you, regarding the expulsion of the humanitarian non-governmental organizations working in the southern Sudan by the rebel movement Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated to all members of the United Nations as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 20 (b).

(*Signed*) Elfatih **Erwa**
Permanent Representative

00-33711 (E) 100300

Annex

Letter dated 6 March 2000 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan addressed to the Secretary-General

It is with a sense of grief and indignation that I bring to your attention the fact that, on Friday 3 March 2000, the rebel movement expelled around 12 reputable international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the Sudan, mainly from areas under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

SPLA, after failing to impose conditions aimed at affecting the impartiality of the NGOs in fulfilling their cherished humanitarian role in the south, has acted to effect the repatriation of more than 200 employees from various NGOs to Nairobi. This decision will endanger the lives of thousands of Sudanese citizens already facing famine in the areas controlled by SPLA.

This serious decision by SPLA is further blatant proof, yet again, of the obstacles that SPLA uses in order to impede humanitarian activities, as referred to in the report issued by the Secretariat last year on Operation Lifeline Sudan such as the imposition of taxes and the denial of access to relief convoys by SPLA.

The irresponsible position of SPLA, which defied all the appeals made by the members of the donor community, confirms once again the persistent violation of international humanitarian law by SPLA, notably the tripartite agreement organizing Operation Lifeline Sudan and the additional agreements and protocols signed between the Government of the Sudan, the United Nations and the rebel movement addressing relief access and safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

The Government of the Republic of the Sudan, committed to the safety and welfare of all Sudanese people, whether in Government-controlled areas or in rebel-held areas, and fully aware of the negative and catastrophic impact of such a decision, has invited all those NGOs expelled by SPLA to launch their humanitarian activities from Khartoum.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Government of the Sudan will continue to honour its commitments through Operation Lifeline Sudan to provide the necessary needs of food and medicine to all citizens affected by the war.

While informing you of this inhuman decision by SPLA, which was also condemned by many members of the donor community, we would appreciate it if the Secretariat would express its condemnation of the position of SPLA.

Mustafa Osman **Ismail**
Minister of External Relations

UNITED
NATIONS

A S

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/54/790
S/2000/204
10 March 2000

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 63
QUESTION OF CYPRUS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 8 March 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government and further to our letter dated 8 February 2000 (A/54/743-S/2000/100), I have the honour to draw your attention to new violations of the flight information region (FIR) of Nicosia and the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus by military aircraft of the Turkish Air Force, recorded on 10, 14, 18, 21, 24, 25 and 26 February as well as 2 March 2000.

On 10 February, one C-160 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Karpasia (Cape of Apostolos Andreas), before exiting in a south-easterly direction. Early that afternoon, the same aircraft violated once more the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus, flying over the area of Karpasia, before returning to the FIR of Ankara.

On 14 February, one B-200 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Mesaoria, before landing at 1055 hours, at the illegal airport of Tymbou, in the occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus, from where it departed at 1349 hours, returning to the FIR of Ankara.

On 18 February, one F-4 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Karpasia (Cape of Apostolos Andreas), before exiting in a south-easterly direction.

On 21 February, one F-4 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Karpasia (Cape of Apostolos Andreas), before exiting in a south-easterly direction.

On 24 February, eight F-4 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations.

On 25 February, four Turkish military aircraft (2 F-4 and 2 RF-4) entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Karpasia (Cape of Apostolos Andreas) and Kyrenia.

On 26 February, one CN-235 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Mesaoria, before landing at 1030 hours, at the illegal airport of Tymbou, in the occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus, from where it departed at 1626 hours, returning to the FIR of Ankara.

On 2 March, one CN-235 Turkish military aircraft entered the Nicosia FIR violating international air traffic regulations. The aircraft in question violated the national air space of the Republic of Cyprus flying over the area of Mesaoria, before landing at 1127 hours, at the illegal airport of Tymbou, in the occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus, from where it departed at 1434 hours, returning to the FIR of Ankara.

While strongly protesting these actions which violate international law, as well as the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus, and calling for their cessation, I would like, once more, to express the hope that the necessary positive attitude will be shown by Turkey, so that the efforts for finding a just and viable solution of the Cyprus problem, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, will not be adversely affected.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 63, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Agis LOIZOU
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

UNITED
NATIONS

A S

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/54/791
S/2000/205
10 March 2000

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 50
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fifth year

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 31 of General Assembly resolution 54/189 A of 17 December 1999, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report every three months during its fifty-fourth session on the progress of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). The present report, which covers developments since the issuance of my annual report on 16 November 1999 (A/54/536-S/1999/1145) until 6 March 2000, is also submitted in response to requests by the Security Council for regular information on the main developments in Afghanistan, including those in the humanitarian and human rights fields.

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

A. Activities of my Personal Representative and of the Special Mission

2. On 12 January 2000, I informed the Security Council and the General Assembly of my intention to appoint Francesc Vendrell as my Personal Representative and Head of UNSMA. Immediately following his appointment, which became effective on 1 February, my Personal Representative embarked on his first visit to Afghanistan as well as to several countries in the region and beyond, including members of the "six plus two" group.

3. From 3 to 23 February, Mr. Vendrell visited Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation, having already visited Washington, D.C., prior to his departure. In Kabul, he held meetings with Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, Chairman of the Taliban Council of Ministers, and Maulawi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, the Taliban Foreign Minister. In Dushanbe, he held discussions with Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, and was received by Emomali Rakhmonov, the President of Tajikistan. In Dushanbe, Islamabad, Tehran, Tashkent and Moscow, he had meetings with the Foreign Ministers and other senior authorities of the respective Governments.

4. The purpose of my Personal Representative's visit was to familiarize himself with Afghanistan and the countries in the region and to listen to the views of the Afghan parties as well as of the Governments of the "six plus two" group. The two Afghan parties stated their readiness to cooperate with him in the search for a political solution to the Afghan conflict. Both expressed their opposition to terrorism as well as their commitment to progressively eradicate drug cultivation. They also stated their respective positions with regard to the establishment of a broadly based, multi-ethnic and representative government. The Taliban authorities proposed that such a government be answerable to the Emir-ul-Momineen and that the opposition accept the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as the form of government. This condition, however, is clearly unacceptable to the United Front, which favours a political solution based on the establishment of a provisional government composed of all the factions and representative of the main ethnic groups until such time, hopefully in two years, as a loya jirgah, or grand assembly, could be convened or elections organized.

5. While the Taliban authorities said they were not opposed in principle to eventual elections or to a loya jirgah, they mentioned two other "alternatives" for ending the conflict, namely the surrender of the opposition or a military victory. On the issue of a ceasefire, my Personal Representative formed the impression that neither side ruled out a new offensive in the spring or summer, the Taliban because it had not given up hopes of a military victory and the United Front because it might aim at regaining the territory it had lost to the Taliban.

6. Regarding the Security Council demand that the Taliban turn over Usama bin Laden without delay, Mullah Rabbani reminded my Personal Representative that Mr. bin Laden had taken up residence when Afghanistan was under the control of the previous regime. He also maintained that there was not sufficient evidence linking him to terrorist bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and that, at any rate, Mr. bin Laden was no longer able to carry out activities from Afghan territory.

7. The Governments of the "six plus two" group visited by Mr. Vendrell expressed concern at the absence of a political solution to the Afghan conflict and at the likelihood of renewed fighting after the winter snows had melted. They shared the view that international terrorism, illicit drug production and trafficking and extremism emanating from Afghanistan posed a serious threat to the stability of the region. They all reaffirmed their commitment to work with the United Nations, which they considered should continue to play the central

role in international efforts to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement to the Afghan crisis. Many of them strongly criticized the Taliban for its apparent determination to seek a military solution, which, those Governments asserted, was an unachievable and unacceptable option.

8. These Governments conveyed their interest in strengthening the role of the "six plus two" group as a means of bringing the parties to the negotiating table and assisting in the search for a lasting political settlement. In this connection, the meeting of the group held on 28 February, focusing on the issue of illicit drugs (see below), is a reflection of this renewed commitment and, hopefully, a harbinger of closer cooperation among its members.

9. Following the acceptance by the Taliban authorities of the deployment of the UNSMA Civil Affairs Unit, four civil affairs officers have arrived and have been assigned to Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif. The political component of UNSMA will be increased to its full capacity by the end of June, by which time the new Tehran office should have been opened. It is also envisaged that by then the Mission's presence in Kabul will have been enlarged.

B. Other political developments

10. During the reporting period a series of diplomatic contacts took place regarding Afghanistan. These include a visit to Tehran in early December by Pakistan's Chief Executive, General Pervez Musharraf, official visits to Islamabad in late January by Taliban "Foreign Minister" Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil and Taliban "Council of Ministers" Chairman Mullah Rabbani, and a visit to Pakistan in the third week of January by the United States Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Karl Inderfurth, during which he met with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the former Taliban "Minister for Information and Culture". For his part, Professor Rabbani, the President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, travelled to Tehran in mid-December for talks with Iranian President Mohammed Khatami and other Iranian authorities, as well as with the Afghan leaders in exile, followed by a visit to the United Arab Emirates.

11. In January an Iranian technical delegation visited areas controlled by the Taliban with the stated purpose of inspecting and assessing the damage suffered by their diplomatic facilities in the cities of Herat and Kabul. The Islamic Republic of Iran has yet to receive what it considers a satisfactory reply from the Taliban to its demand for the apprehension and extradition or punishment of those responsible for the killing of Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-e Sharif in August 1998. The Islamic Republic of Iran reopened a border post for trade with Afghanistan in the autumn of 1999.

12. President Khatami, in his capacity as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), launched a diplomatic initiative in February. An OIC delegation, led by the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, and composed of the other members of the OIC Committee for Afghanistan, toured Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Saudi Arabia. Following this mission, OIC invited the United Front and the Taliban to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for separate talks with the OIC mission with a view to convening eventual face-to-face negotiations between the two sides. My

Personal Representative represented the United Nations as an observer at these separate meetings, which took place from 7 to 9 March in Jeddah. Prior to these meetings I had met personally with the members of the delegation when they visited New York on 1 March. Although the two warring factions were unable to reach an agreement or to move closer to a political solution in Afghanistan, both sides agreed to hold another round of indirect talks after the haj season.

13. In a follow-up to former Afghan king Zahir's proposal to convene an emergency loya jirgah, a second preparatory meeting was held in Rome, from 22 to 25 November 1999, with assistance from the Government of Italy. More than 60 prominent Afghan individuals from both outside and inside Afghanistan participated in the meeting. A United Nations observer was present, as were representatives of France, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States.

14. At the conclusion of the meeting, the group issued a statement saying that the participants in the Rome meeting had agreed that an emergency loya jirgah would be the most effective mechanism for resolving the Afghan conflict and that it should be held in Afghanistan. They decided, within six months after the Rome meeting, to send delegations to the United Nations and other international bodies and the countries concerned as well as to Afghanistan's main warring factions in order to seek their cooperation and participation in the loya jirgah.

15. At around the same time, the executive committee of the so-called Cyprus meeting convened in Tehran. The committee, consisting of 25 core members of the Cyprus meeting, discussed practical measures for achieving its ultimate goal, which is also the convening of a loya jirgah in Afghanistan. In January, the committee dispatched delegations to Kandahar and Feyzabad to inform the Taliban and the United Front of their objectives.

16. Following the failure of the Taliban authorities to comply with the Security Council's demand contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 1267 (1999) regarding Usama bin Laden, the Council's sanctions went into effect on 14 November 1999. Flights of Afghanistan's Ariana Airlines to its only regular destination, the United Arab Emirates, were discontinued. Pakistan announced that it had closed branches of Afghan banks in its territory and frozen Taliban accounts. However, efforts to persuade the Taliban to comply with the Council's demand have so far proven unsuccessful.

17. During the reporting period, some Taliban-held areas have reportedly experienced difficulties, including incidents of looting followed by a series of explosions in Kabul in late February. On a separate occasion, the elders of the tribes of Khost in late January expelled the Taliban-appointed Governor of the province. This incident has been interpreted by political observers as a signal of dissatisfaction among the local Pashtuns with the conduct of the Kandahari Taliban.

18. The United Front has also faced problems as some of their commanders defected to the Taliban. In addition to the deaths of some of their prominent commanders, including Commander Najmuddin in Badakhshan and Abdul Charik in

Sar-e Pul, there have been reports of infighting among the United Front leadership.

19. Two hijackings of passenger airliners served to draw considerable media attention to Afghanistan. In the first such incident, involving an Indian airliner forced to land at Kandahar, United Nations staff helped provide relief to the passengers during their long ordeal as hostages. A United Nations representative was also present during the efforts leading to the resolution of the second incident, when an Afghan airliner was hijacked to London.

C. Activities in New York

20. The "six plus two" group convened a meeting on 28 February in New York at the level of Permanent Representative and above in order to discuss the issue of illicit drugs emanating from Afghanistan. The meeting, which was also attended by senior counter-narcotics experts from the capitals of the "six plus two" members, was co-chaired by Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

21. My Personal Representative briefed the group on his first mission to the region. The group also heard an oral report from Mr. Javad Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the activities of the OIC delegation that had visited the region.

22. Turning to the main topic on the agenda, the "six plus two" group heard a statement by Mr. Arlacchi on the question of illicit drug production and trafficking in the context of Afghanistan as well as his agency's activities in the region. Members of the group agreed that the "six plus two" could make a useful contribution to drug-related problems and that the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention should play a key role in facilitating its activities in this respect. They exchanged views on how best to address the drug-related issues in a coordinated manner with a view to eliminating illicit drug production in and trafficking from Afghanistan through a comprehensive and balanced regional action plan.

23. At the end of the meeting, members of the group agreed to continue working-level consultations with a view to convening a technical meeting supported by the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in early April in Vienna.

D. Military situation

24. Although fighting was at a low ebb during the reporting period, mainly because of severe winter weather and the occurrence of the holy month of Ramadan, it has never come to a complete halt. The flow of weapons and other war-making materials into Afghanistan has continued throughout the period, enabling both sides to prepare for spring offensives.

25. On 20 January, the Taliban launched a new offensive in Sar-e Pul in the northern province of Jowjzan, with air assaults and ground forces composed of

several thousand fighters, and captured the main district of Sang Charak. The area was recognized as one of the Uzbek-populated pockets that remained in an alliance with the United Front. The Uzbek fighters, as well as the local population, fled to the area of Balkhab.

26. In mid-February, the Taliban forces attempted to approach the main district of Dara-e Souf in the province of Samangan. Despite a few clashes on the ground between the two sides and a series of Taliban air raids, the United Front has so far been able to defend the area.

27. Following an increasing number of reports that both sides were preparing for new offensives at front lines to the north of Kabul, the Taliban forces, on 1 March, initiated fresh fighting in the province of Kunduz and the Shomali Plains. Simultaneously, the Taliban continued their attacks in the province of Samangan in the Dara-e Souf area where the United Front renewed their efforts to resist. The Taliban initially achieved significant progress in Kunduz and, on 2 March, captured Sher Khan Bandar, a port town on the Amu Darya river and the town of Imam Sahib. At the front lines to the north of Kabul, the Taliban advanced only to a very limited extent after some vigorous fighting. By 5 March the United Front had dispatched additional forces from the northern part of the province of Takhar and succeeded in recapturing ground lost in Kunduz. The United Front claims to have recaptured the towns of Imam Sahib and Sher Khan Bandar. Similarly, on 6 March the front lines to the north of Kabul were pushed back to the same location as in late February. In the area of Dara-e Souf, the most recent fighting led to the capture of some additional areas by the United Front.

III. HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A. Humanitarian situation

28. While the intensity of conflict over the period has reduced from the levels seen during the summer and fall of 1999, continued insecurity, as well as difficulties in obtaining permission to conduct assessments in areas recently affected by conflict, restrict humanitarian access to several parts of the country. Moreover, the impact of the Taliban offensive during the summer continues to be felt by large numbers of people who were displaced from their homes and who are gathered in Kabul, the Panjshir Valley and in various locations in the north and east of the country. Sporadic fighting in the central and northern regions has continued and is further complicating assistance efforts as well as compounding the plight of many civilians.

29. In early December, the United Nations negotiated a cross-front-line operation to provide for some 60,000 displaced persons in the Panjshir Valley. A joint commission composed of representatives from both the Taliban and the United Front was brought together by the United Nations to oversee the operation. United Nations demining teams initially cleared the road through the front-line area and subsequently escorted each of the five convoys that delivered the supplies. A total of 750 tons of food and several tons of essential non-food items provided by the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC), among others, were transported from Kabul across the front line into the valley, where they were distributed to the most vulnerable. In addition to providing food and non-food assistance, the United Nations has provided temporary shelter, health services, sanitation and supplementary food with support from international and national non-governmental organizations. The relief operation is coordinated through parallel task forces of United Nations agencies, ICRC, and non-governmental organizations in both Islamabad and Kabul. Efforts to resume the cross-front-line operation in February ran into security and political difficulties. As at 6 March only one small convoy had been able to cross from Kabul to the Panjshir Valley.

30. Throughout December, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinated a relief effort that brought urgently required winter relief items to 2,000 families and 150 tons of wheat provided by WFP to the neediest 1,000 families in Dara-e Souf in Samangan province. The United Nations mobilized a convoy of 1,500 donkeys contributed by all the villages along the route to move the aid across snow-covered passes to those in need.

31. Since the last report, there has been an increase in the number of displaced persons in Kabul. Approximately 16,000 displaced persons are now receiving assistance in the former Soviet Embassy compound. Regular food inputs from WFP have been matched by joint United Nations/non-governmental organizations non-food distributions. In addition, UNICEF, together with non-governmental organizations, has supported the provision of basic services (safe water, health care and education) and undertaken winterization measures for buildings in the compound. The bulk of the displaced persons remaining in Kabul continue to reside in the homes of relatives, who are themselves often poor and vulnerable. To address these needs, a programme funded by the European Community Humanitarian Office has been launched in the city to provide employment for some 4,000 families during the winter. In addition, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) is assisting more than 3,000 vulnerable women during the winter with cash for work in the production of relief items, which will benefit, in turn, another 29,000 vulnerable women. This has provided wages for needy women as well as improved the stock of emergency supplies.

32. The combination of a poor harvest, the tightening of border controls and a harsh winter with little precipitation has exacerbated food insecurity for the majority of Afghans. These conditions have contributed to the 45 per cent increase in the price of wheat across the country since October 1999. Food insecurity is particularly severe in Kabul, the central highlands, Badakhshan, Ghowr and Kandahar.

33. In Ghowr province, WFP Afghanistan is currently supporting an emergency food distribution targeting three districts (Chaghcharan, Tulle and Shahrak). By the end of March a total of 712 tons of wheat will have been distributed to 7,120 families. In Kandahar, 10 districts of the province, Kandahar City and parts of the provinces of Helmand and Zabol are being targeted for emergency food distribution. It is expected that WFP will distribute 7,164 tons of wheat to an estimated 200,000 people.

34. WFP has expanded its bakery project to the cities of Mazar-e Sharif and Jalalabad following surveys that employed 900 female surveyors. In Mazar-e Sharif, 80 bakeries have been selected to provide heavily subsidized bread to 85,000 food-insecure people for a seven-month period; 65 per cent of the recipients are women. In Jalalabad, it is estimated that the bakery will support approximately 100,000 vulnerable individuals. The bakery project in Kabul, which feeds 270,000 vulnerable people on a daily basis throughout the year, continues to be supported by WFP.

35. Health conditions for many Afghans continue to be extremely precarious. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports a significant increase in the incidence of acute respiratory infections, which account for 30 per cent of outpatients and 25 per cent of all deaths of children under five in Afghanistan. WHO is conducting training for male and female health care staff in various locations in the treatment and prevention of acute respiratory infections and, in collaboration with UNICEF and health-related non-governmental organizations, has provided materials and antibiotics in all regions. In addition, measles outbreaks have occurred in various areas, including Dara-e Souf (Samangan province) and Ghazni, Herat and Badakhshan provinces. WHO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and non-governmental organizations has responded with investigation teams, medical supplies and, in some cases, vaccination of surrounding villages. In total, more than 650 people have died from measles.

36. Education in general, and in particular for girls, remains extremely problematic. Education is one of the priorities for discussion at the Joint Consultative Committee meetings between the Taliban authorities and the United Nations. Regrettably, little progress has been made at the policy level. However, non-formal home-based schools for girls and boys have emerged in many locations in Afghanistan and are being supported by a number of assistance agencies, including non-governmental organizations. In rural areas, the Taliban is often more responsive to the demands of local communities for formal education. In addition, support to the BBC/Reach project (radio education for Afghan children) and to BBC/AEP (radio awareness and education programme) continues through UNICEF and other agencies.

37. With the onset of winter, voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran slowed considerably. Since mid-December 1999, 942 families (5,652 persons) voluntarily repatriated from Pakistan, while 177 families (920 persons) returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the same period, 3,043 Afghans were deported from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Except for 78 families (448 persons), the deportees were single men, many of whom claimed to have left family members in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

38. In February, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Islamic Republic of Iran signed an agreement on a joint programme for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Set to commence on 8 April 2000, the programme envisages the return to Afghanistan of 3,000 Afghan refugees per week. UNHCR is mobilizing the aid community in western and southern Afghanistan to improve preparedness for a rapid response to the expected influx.

39. The United Nations-coordinated mine action programme for Afghanistan continues to survey and clear mined and battlefield areas. The area cleared by the programme since its inception now totals 442 square kilometres. The total remaining mined area, including newly surveyed areas, is estimated at 716 square kilometres of which over 90 per cent is high-priority agricultural and grazing land. The programme currently has a shortfall of $17.9 million for its activities for the remainder of the year.

40. The annual poppy survey for the 1999/00 growing season was initiated in early 2000. Following the record estimated 43 per cent increase in poppy cultivation in 1999, there is good reason, based on the survey, to expect a decrease in 2000. Attention will also focus on areas where the authorities, with the encouragement of the Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention, have proclaimed bans on poppy cultivation. The Office notes further progress in two inter-agency initiatives aimed at drug reduction in Afghanistan. Funding has now been received for the Greater Azro Initiative, which the Office will now take forward in partnership with UNHCR. Planning for an inter-agency integrated development programme for Helmand province is also advancing.

B. Human rights

41. War and winter have once again proven to be a deadly combination for Afghans. Sporadic fighting in recent months has taken a cruel toll on civilians already weakened by decades of warfare and grinding poverty that can, in part, be attributed to a long history of underdevelopment.

42. A significant characteristic of recent offensives is the deliberate targeting of civilians and the destruction of their assets and means of survival. Bombing in the Panjshir Valley in November 1999 and February 2000 has resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Fighting in Khoja Ghar in Takhar province and in the Dara-e Souf area of Samangan province towards the end of 1999 was accompanied by widespread burning and looting of homes and property. Fighting in December and January in the Sang Charak district of Jowjzan province has added to the growing number of people who are displaced in remote areas.

43. Even in the best of circumstances, winter is a difficult experience for many in Afghanistan. This current winter is no exception, especially for communities directly affected by warfare. The harsh conditions of winter, particularly in snowbound mountainous areas, will add to the suffering of displaced persons who have been made homeless. The difficulties faced by humanitarian agencies in gaining and maintaining access exacerbate socio-economic conditions that already constitute a threat to the lives of Afghans and their ability to enjoy other fundamental human rights. It is of equal concern that the right of displaced persons to return to their place of origin is not always respected.

44. Civilians, particularly those in war-affected communities, continue to be subjected to a wide range of human rights violations. There are continued reports of summary executions, arbitrary detention and forced labour of those in detention.

45. The indirect effect of fighting on the rights of Afghans is a continuing and major concern. Warfare in the Dara-e Souf area, for example, has severely affected the health and well-being of the population and their meagre health care facilities. A recent measles epidemic has added to an already high infant mortality rate. Elsewhere in Afghanistan, preventable childhood diseases contribute to the high number of children who die before their fifth birthday. Growing deprivation, including in particular among female-headed households and families with no routine source of income, is adding to the large number of impoverished people who are often reduced to begging to help them survive.

46. There has been some easing of restrictions in some parts of Afghanistan on the mobility of women and girls, particularly in terms of their access to the limited health care and educational facilities that are available. United Nations agencies are continuing to pursue these and related issues in Joint Consultative Committee discussions and at the local level.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

47. Although recent fighting has been confined to specific areas of the country, the apparent targeting of civilians and their assets has worsened the living conditions of the Afghan population. In the meantime, the impact of last summer's Taliban offensives has continued to have an adverse effect on the tens of thousands of internally displaced Afghans scattered throughout Afghanistan. Not only is the fighting likely to continue, despite repeated calls for a ceasefire by the Security Council and the General Assembly, but reports indicate that a major offensive is being prepared for the spring, suggesting that military supplies continue to be received from neighbouring countries. In view of these circumstances I have asked my Personal Representative to concentrate his efforts to persuade the parties to enter into a process of dialogue that may lead to a stable and verifiable ceasefire and, eventually, to an agreement on the establishment of a broadly based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government.

48. I commend the efforts of OIC under the chairmanship of President Khatami to bring the Afghan parties together in Jeddah. The stated commitment of the Governments that are members of the "six plus two" group to revitalize this mechanism is also encouraging.

49. I hope that the "six plus two" group's initiative on illicit drugs combined with its recent deliberations and the efforts of the Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention will result in measurable progress on the problem of illicit cultivation, trafficking and consumption of drugs in Afghanistan and the region.

50. The peace initiatives of non-combatant Afghans such as the Rome and Cyprus processes are noteworthy. If coordinated and pursued in an altruistic spirit they may prove to be a useful complement to the overall efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement of the Afghan conflict.

51. It is encouraging to note the phased deployment of the UNSMA Civil Affairs Unit inside Afghanistan and also the increased cooperation extended by the two

main Afghan parties to the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan.

52. Before concluding, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the humanitarian agencies for their efforts in ensuring cross-front-line convoys in the Panjshir Valley and elsewhere with all the attendant risks of such operations, which require careful negotiation and coordination between the warring sides.

UNITED
NATIONS

A S

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/54/792
S/2000/209
13 March 2000
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 20 (b)
STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 10 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the statement on humanitarian aid in southern Sudan issued on 8 March 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Antonio MONTEIRO
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

00-34059 (E) 150300 210300

Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement on humanitarian aid in southern Sudan issued on 8 March 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union

The European Union expresses its grave concern at the conditions imposed by the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SPLM/SRRA) on non-governmental organizations working in southern Sudan, which have led to the withdrawal of many of those organizations.

The European Union, one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid to the areas controlled by SPLM/SRRA, is particularly worried by the consequences of this situation, which will threaten the lives of thousands of people already in danger because of the civil war in the country. It is also concerned at the greater risks for the safety and equipment of humanitarian staff.

The European Union urges SPLM/SRRA to resume negotiations with the non-governmental organizations as soon as possible with the objective of creating conditions that will allow all such organizations to carry out humanitarian operations unhindered and in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with the present statement.